

MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

Success Stories from the Field

Ehrhardt Tool and Machine Co Inc

Illinois Manufacturing Extension Center

Space Solution Generates Excess Capacity, New Sales

Client Profile:

Ehrhardt Tool and Machine Co., Inc., is a manufacturer of stamping dies, stamped metal parts and special machines for customers such as Carrier, Whirlpool, Armstrong, Nordyne and Framatome. While serving primarily domestic markets, Ehrhardt also has customers in Germany and France. The company is located in Granite City, Illinois, and employs 70 people.

Situation:

When Tom Tierney took the helm at Ehrhardt Tool and Machine, he saw an opportunity to make some long needed changes in the operations. The designer and builder of customized tools, dies, and automated equipment had seen productivity decline in recent years in part because of long material and employee travel distances. Because the company does not 'pump out commodities' and every job is designed in-house and custom built, the more traditional lean manufacturing techniques did not appear to apply. Further, the company was facing enormous competitive pressures. "To compete, we must constantly innovate, improve our processes, cut costs and reinvent and redefine how we do things," said Tom. "Investing in new manufacturing technology and looking for ways to modernize is the only way you're going to survive." President Tierney contacted the Illinois Manufacturing Extension Center (IMEC), a NIST MEP network affiliate, for assistance.

Solution:

IMEC specialists worked with Tierney and his team to identify specific solutions to reorganize the workspace, implement point of use storage, and streamline communication throughout his 85,000-square-foot plant. IMEC specialists developed five options for freeing floor space by reconfiguring the placement of machines, and offered eight high-impact changes Ehrhardt should implement immediately.

Results:

- * Increased shop floor space by 40 percent.
- * Decreased employees 'walk time' by 30 minutes per day.
- * Increased sales by 10 to 20 percent.
- * Reduced costs have enabled Ehrhardt to put more resources back into the facilities and further develop the workforce.

Testimonial:

"IMEC helped me identify areas that had long needed serious attention. With their help, we've dramatically reduced set up times, improved product flow and are better documenting our product quality."

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Tom Tierney, President